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SAN FRANCISCO MEDICAL BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.
MEMORIAL OF DR. A. M. WILDER.

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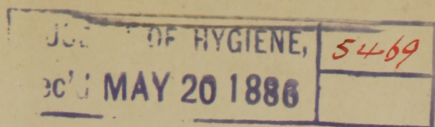
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San Francisco Medical Benevolent Society

Memorial

—OF—

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

At a meeting of the San Francisco Medical Benevolent Society held January 21, 1886, the death of A. M. WILDER, M. D., a member of the society was reported, and Drs. Powers, Ayer and Sawyer were appointed a committee to prepare a minute concerning his death. The committee presented the following Memorial:

MEMORIAL OF Dr. A. M. WILDER.

(Report of COMMITTEE OF S. F. MED. BEN. SOC.)

Abraham M. Wilder, M. D., a member of this Society for ten years, and its honored and most faithful Secretary for seven years, died of pernicious anæmia, on Sunday, January 17, 1886, his disease having been undoubtedly the result of the exposures, malaria, and over-zealous devotion to duty which marked his three years of service in the army during the war.

Dr. Wilder was born in Bolton, Mass., May 3, 1840, of stern old Puritan stock, tracing his lineage back through many generations of honorable names not only on his father's side, but also through the Fletcher family to which his mother belonged.

He inherited from his mother and imbibed through her teachings many of the traits which distinguished him through his busy and useful life, as she gave to his early education unusually painstaking and thorough personal attention. His early experience was that of the New England farmer's boy, of forty years ago, rising at four A. M. to milk cows and drive them to pasture, chop wood and do other so-called "chores" until school time, passing the day at school with very scant leisure for the "play" so loved by boys, and studying in the evening.

In his maturer years he developed more and more the principle thus early engrafted of "all work and no play," until his waking hours seemed all too short for the multitude of cares which he chose to make his own.

Through his mother's devotion to his studies he was enabled to enter the High School at the age of twelve years.

In his fifteenth year the family removed to Kansas, then a frontier settlement, and assisted in the early struggles which made it a free State. His father conducted a farm and a lime-kiln, and in the building of houses and fences, well-digging, and every other necessary labor, toil and privation of frontier and pioneer life, our friend bore his full share.

The fall of 1856 found him behind the counter of the principal dry goods store of the then little town of Lawrence, and later, he was for a time employed in a boot and shoe store; in '57 or '58 the influence of the family physician procured him a place in a drug store where he began laying the foundations of his studies in medicine, for three years devoting his attention to the multifarious duties of the drug store during the day, and spending the evenings in study under the direction of the family physician.

During these years, by rigid economy, he succeeded in saving money enough to take him to Boston, where he entered, in 1861, the Medical School of Harvard University. Here he lived most frugally as a student under the private tuition of Dr. John Green, now of St. Louis, spending a portion of his time daily in serving as private secretary to the Rev. E. E. Hale, whose friendship was most highly prized by Dr. Wilder through the rest of his life.

In 1862, with his preceptor and friend, Dr. Green, and a party of advanced students in the Medical School, he responded to a call of the Government for contract Surgeons, and made two successive short-term contracts, serving as assistant in hospitals, etc.; after which he successfully passed the searching examinations of the service, and received his appointment as Assistant Surgeon of Volunteers.

In 1863, while stationed in Washington on hospital duty, he enrolled himself as a student of medicine in Georgetown University, and took his degree of M. D.

It is a matter for profound regret that Dr. Wilder did not leave an autographic record of his army life; at present there are only a portion of his original orders and appointments to various posts of service, and the recollections of desultory conversations, from which we can draw the story of those years, which, though few and short, were so full of incident that they seemed a whole separate lifetime.

Dr. Wilder's remarkable talents and traits of character soon attracted attention from those in authority, and his appointment as Major and Surgeon of Volunteers soon followed his Lieutenantancy, giving him a much wider sphere of action than would have been his as a regimental surgeon; later he was brevetted Lieutenant-Colonel, which was his rank when discharged. In the field and in post hospitals his surgical skill and sound judgment, his firmness and self-reliance, combined with the knowledge of business methods, and the habit of attention to detail, which were gained during his clerkships, gave him early prominence, and the fact that he served as Medical Director of three different army corps in the field before his twenty-sixth year, shows the estimation in which he was held. His name will be found in many a page of reports of operations in Surgical History of the War of 1861-1865. He served continuously till the close of the war, and then for many months longer sought his discharge in vain, as the Government had need of his marked executive ability in the many complications connected with the close of the war and the disbanding of an immense army, but he was finally mustered out in October, 1865.

His labors while in the army were most arduous and regard-

less of personal ease or comfort, and he narrowly escaped with his life on more than one field of battle while engaged in his surgical duties. As chief operating surgeon of a post hospital, he once stood at the operating table for thirty-six hours without relief, and in many other ways evinced the wonderful power of endurance of his splendid physique, and the unsparing devotion of himself and all his faculties to his country and her defenders.

During a short visit to his home in Lawrence, Kansas, Dr. Wilder was married to Miss Mary E. Jenkins, who, with one daughter and one son, survives him, while five children died in early childhood, and were buried in Oak Hill Cemetery, in Lawrence, where the body of the father was laid to rest with theirs, February 9th, 1886.

After his discharge from the army he spent a few months in Boston, devoting much of his time to the study of ophthalmology under Prof. Henry W. Williams; then, in company with Dr. John Green, made a visit to the hospitals and clinics of London and Paris. On his return, in the spring of 1866, he settled in Lawrence, Kansas, in the practice of general medicine and surgery, where, by his indomitable zeal and the exercise of his finely equipped and cultivated talents, he won a high rank, as is shown by his appointment as chief surgeon of the Kansas Pacific railway, which position he held for several years. From 1863 to 1875, Dr. F. D. Morse was associated with him in practice. In May, 1875, he came to California, on what was intended as a brief trip for health, but was persuaded by Dr. Geo. H. Powers to remain and become associated with him, in the special practice of ophthalmology and otology, and in that partnership the remainder of his life was spent. Here, as ever, he immediately displayed his firm intention to be at least among the foremost, and in the spring of 1876 he

read his first paper on astigmatism before the State Medical Society.

The thoroughness and perfect clearness of this exposition of an obscure subject brought him to the notice of many, and was a corner-stone in what he steadily strove to make the broad foundation for the building of a wide reputation.

Two exhaustive reports to the State Medical Society on the progress of ophthalmology and otology, papers on color-blindness, and on "new and old codes," with many lesser articles, are still in print, attesting, after he is gone, his studious and progressive mind.

He became a member of the San Francisco Medical Benevolent Society in 1875, and has served for seven years as its secretary, bringing to this office the same fidelity, good judgment and zeal which always characterized him, keeping his accounts and reports with a precision, clearness and neatness which could not be excelled. He entertained high hopes for the future of the Society for which he was ever ready to devote his best energies, and in the introduction and discussion of professional topics at the Society's meetings he was always ready to take his part. He joined the San Francisco County Medical Society, and the State Medical Society in 1876, and the American Medical Association in 1885. He was also a member of the Harvard Club of San Francisco, and for several years was Surgeon of the First Regiment, National Guard of California, in which he took great interest, renewing there his military life, as well as in the Grand Army of the Republic and the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States. In 1882 he assumed the Chair of Ophthalmology and Otology in the Medical Department of the University of California, where, by his thoroughness and striving after a higher ideal of his own sphere and of what the school and the University ought to accomplish,

he made himself a conspicuous figure. He had, in no mean degree, the mechanical faculty and power of invention, and at the time of his death had perfected and had only just received the first samples of some twelve or fifteen surgical instruments of his own device, which will be found in the next catalogue of Tieman & Co., too late, alas, for his enjoyment of their usefulness in his own hands or their appreciation by others.

In every relation of life, Dr. A. M. Wilder was the same true, conscientious, untiring, painstaking, thorough and self-reliant man. He was a strong partisan, strong in his likes and dislikes, but always anxious to be just to foe as well as friend. He was singularly reticent in some ways, and always determined to work out for himself every problem presented, and to form his own judgments, and to be the founder of his own fortunes.

He had an inbred hatred of wrong, oppression, falsehood and dishonesty, and could not resist the desire to attack and conquer or reform every form of evil, wherever found. Nor was he contented with present excellence, but was always striving for progress and improvement. He certainly was not one of those whom specialism, as is often charged, makes narrow, for there was no department of knowledge, of philosophy, science, art, or literature in which he was not at all times ready to take and evince a lively interest.

In his death this Society has lost a most esteemed and valuable member, and in many a household, and many a circle, the kind, skillful physician, the warmhearted, constant friend, the busy, energetic, broadminded man of affairs will be sadly missed.

GEO. H. POWERS, M. D., }
WASHINGTON AYER, M. D., } Committee.

A. F. Sawyer M. D.,



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